Challenger

BMX magazine

Volume 3
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Winter
2019/2020

This is Chicago.*

clockwise from top:
Timmy Theus
Mike Parisi
Alex Duleba

Photographs by
David Leep

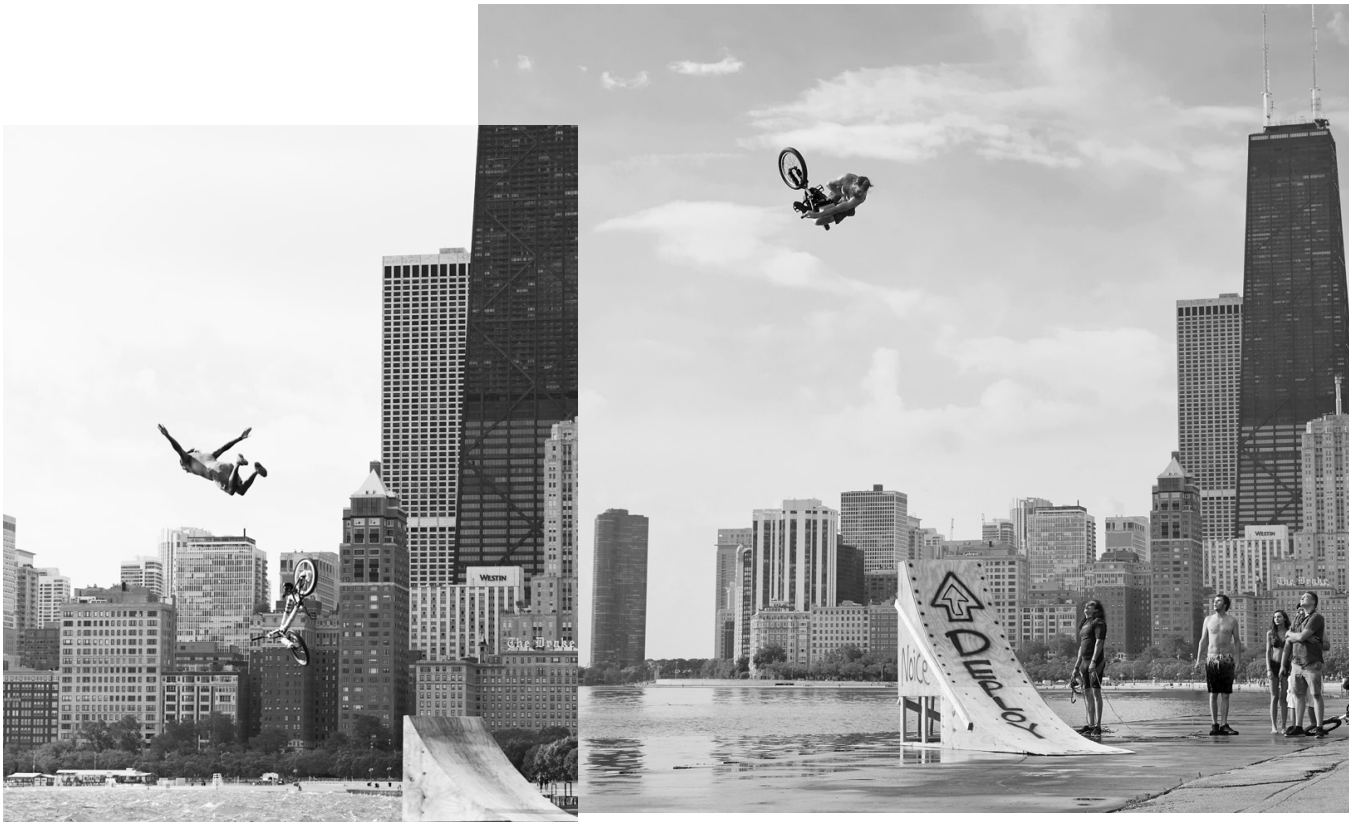
*This is just my version of Chicago, specifically, but not limited to, BMX. It's not meant to be an exhaustive history. Peace to everyone that's come before and those that will come after.
—Nick Ferreira, *Editor*

"Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes—life is good at Bruna's Ristorante"

by Michael P. Daley

The sign glows like melted butter under candlelight. Snow whips in wet. You make for the door. A man is at the bar—short, well-dressed in a tie, his skin a dark tan. Italian-made striped cotton socks flow into shiny shoes that dangle just above the floor as if he were a child tucked into a dinner table. Maybe it's a slow night, like a Tuesday, and this well-dressed man here is sitting alone at the bar under the pinkish red lights that ping softly off the salmon-colored walls haphazardly crowded with tourism posters from Siena. "Buona sera," he says sing-songy in an Italian accent. "Hello," you say. And then nothing. A Eurovision vocalist belts about love from tiny house speakers. You stand awkwardly. It becomes clear that you've never been to Bruna's Ristorante before. "Go to the back," he finally says forgivingly. You'll learn soon enough that this man is no barfly.

This is Luciano Silvestri. He's the bossman, the owner of the best restaurant in Chicago. (This is no baseless claim, I've gone to Bruna's every week for several years now.) And your boyish vision of the man on the barstool dissipates when Luciano jumps to his feet to work the room, pumping arms, lasering in one-liners, drinking to the health of others—and sometimes to his own. **(continued on page 2)**



Above: Logan Beyhl
Left: Alejandro Bedoya

Lake (Michigan) Jumping

Words by Nick Ferreira
Photographs by Daniel Peter

Alejandro Bedoya was probably not the first to jump or ride a bike into Lake Michigan but he certainly elevated the fine art of pedaling a shitty bike at a ramp and freefalling two stories into the ice cold water of one of the finest bodies of freshwater in the continental USA. Bedoya saw the likes of Dave Voelker and other southern California local heroes ejected off their bikes high above Santee, CA puddles on the cover of *BMX Plus!* and thought he could do it in Chicago. As he says "I like diving, and, just like, flipping into water (laughs)." Bedoya, frustrated by the fact that there was nowhere to dive, and flip into water in Chicago, started carting a small ramp in a trailer with the merry pranksters of Chicago's first BMX centric bicycle shop, Nocturnal.

"We were [called] Nocturnal because we liked doing shit at night." Alejandro and his early lake jumping crew did what you do when you go lake jumping at night: crack beers, hang with Lake Michigan nighttime freaks, and generally, party. But they soon realized that Chicago's finest patrolled the lakefront at park closing time and after tickets were issued for drinking they realized they had to figure out a new time. A new friend in a lakefront lifeguard tipped them off to try the morning, before the lifeguards were on duty, and suddenly the Nocturnal crew was not so nocturnal.

The popular BMX kids were the trail kids, "The Lost Boys," you know? Here in the city, there wasn't a lot of people riding that was in the 'scene' and when lake jumping started happening it just kind of brought people over.

A new time to hit the lake sparked a new interest in lake jumping. New interest led to new energy and new energy led to bigger ramps. The crew traded in the trailer for a van and eventually a Lake Shore Drive breakdown lane ramp unloading. The bigger ramps allowed them to catch straight up mad height. Another lake jumping aficionado, Logan Beyhl, talks about the progression to bigger ramps, "I think it happened naturally, each time it got taller and you could go faster and faster at it. The only limiting factor was how we transported it down there. Bigger ramps take more people and BMXers are really flakey at 7am."

Chicago's morning lake dwellers love to watch the party, and sometimes participate. However, Alejandro isn't convinced on letting a random passersby try hurling themselves 15+ feet into the air, especially if they've never hit a ramp on a bike. "I'm always on the fence about it. When they do decide I always ask them 'Have you ever jumped a bike before?' and tell them 'If you don't want to do it, just turn off and ride right into the lake, don't go off the top of the ramp.' But they always go off the top of the ramp, barely making it up to the top before tumbling into the water, narrowly missing their body hitting the cement slab. Miraculously, no one has gotten seriously injured and no one has gotten in deep shit trouble.

Lake jumping has become a Chicago summer tradition. Text messages circulate among Chicago BMXers, typically the night before. It's a pain in the ass but such a fun time that most people, no matter how much fun they had the previous night, make it out to partake in the festivities or watch and egg their friends on. Seeing who makes it out is one of the best parts of lake jumping. Friends who haven't seen each other in awhile greet each other before smashing a 360 tabletop or a fat dive into the lake. Bedoya says that lake jumping bridged a gap. "The popular BMX kids were the trail kids, "The Lost Boys," you know? Here in the city, there wasn't a lot of people riding that were in the 'scene' and when lake jumping started happening it just kind of brought people over."

Intro/Bust

Welcome to the final issue of Volume 3. This issue is about Chicago, my adopted home for the past seven years. Considering I'm from the Northeast of the US, I'm not sure I'm qualified to do this, but what follows is my take (and all of the contributors') on one of the most interesting American cities. Not only did Chicago rekindle my love for BMX, but I continuously feel like a curious teenager here; there's always something to learn and discover for the first time. Life can get pretty monotonous and I'm thankful this city provides an antidote for that, BMX and beyond. Thanks to everyone that's shown me the way over these seven years—it wouldn't have been the same without you.

Nick Ferreira, *Editor*

P.S. I hope you and yours are taking care and are well during this global pandemic we currently find ourselves in. It's rough out there, but I hope you are finding some light.

***Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes* cont.**

Yes, you'll come to understand that Luciano's hospitality is an integral part of an unparalleled meal. And so you see that everyone wants to be his friend as a result.

But Luciano's celebrity is only available to those who know themselves. That kind of knowledge is a scarce resource in the 21st century. Fronters need not apply, "foodies" or otherwise. Wannabe wiseguys blow in on occasion, for instance, pretending they're tight with Luciano in front of girlfriends. These guys try to show off, speaking tourist-level Italian to the man. He'll fire back in English—a savage castration of the Goodfellas ego. There is no safe harbor for even the checkered-tablecloth set. No, if you want to be friends with Luciano, you've got to be genuine. If you know what's really important, then you know yourself.

Bruna's is Luciano and Luciano is Bruna's. But before the joint was inextricable with one man, it was inextricable with one woman. Bruna's used to belong to Bruna Cani. She opened the place at 24th and Oakley Avenue—part of Chicago's original Little Italy before Taylor Street—in 1933, the year legal liquor started flowing again. Much of what little is known about Bruna comes from legends told by old neighbor folk long dead. But like Luciano, we know Bruna was of Tuscan stock (though she was a native Michigan girl). We also know Bruna liked to do things her way.

In her day, Bruna was a boss. She came up with the recipes, she cooked, she ran the show, and, at any given time, she was playing three to ten men like they were fawning groupies. Bruna was a smokeshow. She was, according to Oakley lore, autonomous and willful—"liberated" at a time when few knew what "liberation" even looked like. Punk before punk. Hep before hep. But this sort of sensual approach was also a business strategy. Apparently, her then-husband encouraged flirtation with male customers. Bruna is rumored to have said: "My husband tells me '*fate toccare culo figlie te*… let the customers touch your ass and they will be back.' But I let them touch me for real."

But Bruna didn't only groom a stable of studs. She danced across the goddamn tables like it was Montmartre 1895. She'd fling her umbrella skirt over her head for all to see her panties. Why? Because she could. Bruna didn't care. Diners loved the show too, singing along to old songs, choral-like and drunk, their arms linked and maws wide—dumbfounded with glee as Bruna slid across the bar.

Indeed, the restaurant's origin story speaks to Bruna's will. She had previously opened a restaurant across the street called Orsi & Cani in the 1920s. Apparently, Bruna got in a fight with her co-owner and, to spite him, decided to open her own spot on the cusp of Prohibition's repeal. Another version, as told by 1970s *Tribune* reporter Edie Cohen, is of a similar spirit. Cohen wrote that Bruna opened her own restaurant because she wanted to outdo her husband, who ran a place on Franklin Street. Either way, it was a somewhat humble beginning for Bruna's new restaurant—lunch service only in its earliest days. But dinner service followed soon after. And the joint's been open since, serving proper continental Italian and cozy redsauce for 87 years.

So you've found a table. A Bruna's waiter whooshes in, low-key, studied and slick, like an aristocrat on the lam. "Would you like to start with a drink? Appetizer?" You'll need a martini, yes, gin—in one of those glasses that could double as a birdbath. And, yes, an appetizer, too. In this latter regard, you can roll any which way and not go wrong. But the bruschetta is essential. Usually an entirely forgettable dish, Bruna's is transcendent. (**continued on page 4**)

The Freestyle Experience

Entry 006
by Richard Mungall

Chicago. The relationship I've had with this city is like no other. Some of my first memories and some of my best memories were created in this place.

I'm young, maybe four years old, driving with my mom down I-94. The fading blue winter light is cast over the grey mud/sludge that used to be snow, but is now frozen solid along the sides of the road. After passing through miles of suburbs we are entering the city. The freeway widens, feeling like a canyon carved out of a continuous mass of buildings criss-crossed by train bridges. I'm impatiently awaiting that moment when the skyline becomes visible, like some space colony of towers and lights floating on the completely flat Illinois horizon. Even as a kid I was feeling some kind of adrenaline rush with all the traffic and energy, getting denser and more frenetic as we approached the center.

Then, an eternal childhood hour later, we're driving through the Southside. Now I'm mesmerized by the endless factories, an entirely different kind of man-made landscape. Across the horizon I see thousands of white lights like some kind of post-apocalyptic dreamspace; then, plumes of toxic smoke fan out into the wind; then, flames waving from the tips of skinny metal chimneys dot the sky. The scene is cold, metallic and barren. During the day, the air would be a hazy orange obscuring the crisp blue sky. Now at night, the sodium lamps diffuse a different hazy orange, filling the whole atmosphere. As we drive the unnameable factory smells of this landscape enter the car, whether or not the heat in my mom's Dodge Aries is on.

So here was this city, unimaginably large for my 3 foot tall body and limited life experience, and it was a mystery. What was this place? What was inside? Who inhabited these spaces? What was it like to be downtown? Or on the ground level of the towering housing projects stretched along the fourteen lane Dan Ryan? How would it feel to wander the fields threaded through the dozens of square miles of factories straddling the lake? Chicago took on a mythical status and I knew that someday I'd have to become intimate with it from the inside.

At 14 I had been riding street for a few years, fanning out further and further into the rundown landscape of mid-90s Milwaukee. My older friends got cars and we started regularly making the trip down to Chicago. I remember Dustin driving his Astrovan straight through the toll gate, shattering it, not giving a fuck. I remember shitty racks strapped to the trunk, an extra bike or two over capacity, doing 90 through traffic. There'd often be two or three car convoys in the left lane to deliver 10+ crazy ass Milwaukee kids to the streets of Chicago. We were discovering a freedom that other kids at school couldn't even imagine and I was elated to finally penetrate the city I fantasized about years earlier.

To this day there is no better vibe than a hot summer night surrounded by skyscrapers with the strangely empty streets all to ourselves. Nostalgic perfection. We'd ride by the wedge gap to wallride at the downtown jail, just to marvel that someone had actually done it. We'd rebel run the holy grail ledges of the Sears Tower before we got the boot 30 seconds later. The session would meander through the vast Loop to our favorite spots: the Picasso statue wallride and the manny pad at its base; the amazing wedge walls and ledges at the Chase tower; the plasticy benches in front of the MCA; the 3 space 3 space 3 where we learned fakie everything; and the grimy underground loading docks of Lower Wacker Drive, with goofy randomness and Hostess apple pies fueling the journey. The session would continue all the way north to the Gold Coast where we'd do our first rails in between luxury high rise apartments; northwest to the gates of Cabrini Green; west through the crumbling meatpacking district; and later, we'd naively head straight south on State Street to explore the burned out housing projects I saw from the window of the car as a kid.

More trips were made, time passed, life happened, and at 24 I was heading to live in Chicago for art school. So much of me had been waiting for this. My riding skills were on point, I was obsessed with photography and video, and finally I was able to bring them together in the city I had always mythologized. One of my favorite BMX homies, Thomas, and my photo partner in crime, Nick, moved into an apartment on the Southside. Thus began one of the best years of my life.

I drove thousands of miles, scanning for BMX and photo spots at the same time, the most ideal combination of tools for urban exploration. My bike brought me to perhaps the best find of my life, an entire abandoned community college, a virtual skatepark that was completely untouched. Thomas and I rode and filmed. And photography fueled my curiosity for everything else, taking me to the factories that caught my wide eyes as a child.

Once I covered major parts of the city I began with the suburbs, driving out further to comb behind the strip malls of Cicero, Berwyn and Oak Park, the industrial parks and trainyards of Bedford Park, Dolton and Blue Island, and the shiny business parks surrounding O'Hare. I'd check out Frank Lloyd Wright architecture, hit corner stores, and devour the city's amazing history along the way. I was interested in anything that deepened my intimacy to this 30 miles of city along an oceanic lake and the sprawling mass of 100 suburbs that fan out in three compass directions, the place called Chicagoland.

Here's some memories, discoveries, and achievements that I'm stoked on: making hundreds of first time spot discoveries and the dope spot map full of color coded pins that marked them (Chicago riders today still haven't found some of them...) Those late night pizza slices at Benny's on 18th with Thomas. The Pink Line el train, as if made solely for parading the skyline in front of my eyes. The chill vibes of the 31st Street skatepark and the lumpy concrete that made it that much better. My dope back porch overlooking a copper smelting plant which clanked 24 hours per day, and the cat that would chill and eat milk out of my cereal bowl every morning. My sculpture that still stands downtown in Grant park and a portfolio of medium format prints. West Loop sessions before the crumbling loading docks were replaced with tech startups and hype night life. Penetrating McDonald's world headquarters. Sneaking into working and abandoned factories and warehouses, old meat packing plants, and even the blast furnaces of Arcelor-Mittal Steel to watch the liquid metal pouring out like it was the 19th century. Maybe most of all, posting up on my little 3 step stoop on 21st and Throop, feeling like time stopped and that life would last forever.

Since that time, Chicago has changed. For better or worse, some of my favorite ruins have been razed and neighborhoods have been redeveloped. And what was once mysterious and vast is now a place I know in great detail to the point that much of the early novelty has worn off. But what I love about Chicago is that it is just too big, and too real, for late stage capitalism to ever be fully concealed behind a consumer spectacle. There's always more to explore.

Since that time, I have changed, so my present relationship with Chicago is more complex and full of contradictions. I now know that those landscapes that mesmerized me as a kid are literally destroying the planet. Those fumes that came in through my apartment windows were probably putting heavy metals into my body. The gnarly and fascinating history of the city is full of hellish working conditions and labor struggles, and when the soul sucking jobs moved overseas, the void that remained was even worse. I've also become aware of my immense privilege in being able to use other people's neighborhoods as a playground and canvas, having the choice to leave when I want to. For many these are sites of life-long suffering; for me these sites evoked complex feelings and immense curiosity, inspiring multiple forms of creative engagement. What does this mean? I'm still not sure where I land in all this but I've reached a point in my life where I can hold, and even relish contradictions. All I know is that I was driven to experience these spaces directly using the tools I had available, whether sliding my pegs across various surfaces or using meticulous photographic compositions as a method to examine every detail of a landscape. Without explanation, this 30 years of personal history with the many places called "Chicago" has happened, and these experiences have fundamentally shaped who I've become. ©

Chicago 2nd

Started far child, reporting,

Then years later a youth,
In a tunnel of glass rocketing
The underground, shooking overground,

An image got stuck on the stairway

To the Picasso.

I met the best minds of my generation
Fronting the Waterway mungbox,

Opening gates,
Web and months gone by,
The free room got me in,
I was stuck.

Open book on a red blank page,
The spark was typin'

Beats over bridges and blinded by
An illusion hidden in squared angles

Spinning the wheels of psychogeographie,

We were stuck.

The 69th street found,
the 69th street grinds, the 69th street scare,

Heat lasted 3 months,

Now reading the snail and the whale
The anti past is gone but

Stuck up in here, not played, Stuck.

—Thomas Hirat

Illustrations throughout by Nick Garcia

William Kyle by Tim Burkhart

LOAFERS
Chicago Bars

In 2020, the forward leaning handlebar or "Chicago Bar" has reached popularity levels heretofore only seen in the 1980s. This comes as no surprise. Nationalism, racism, misogyny, and economic individualism have also reached 1980s levels.

In this climate, an aggressive handlebar position makes sense. Elbows out, chest open, Chicago'd riders project confidence, even defiance, in the face of these societal challenges.

The rest of the cycling world could learn a lot from today's bmxers. Perhaps a return to flipped drop bars is right around the corner. I, for one, would like to see more untied work boots in the average cyclists' wardrobe. Maybe beach cruisers will make a comeback.

Stand up, pedal hard. We'll get through this together.

Viva Chicago ©

A Brief History of Chicago Flatland

by Erik Matsunaga

The Winter 1984/1985 issue of Southern California-based *Freestylin' Magazine* featured a spread on the Elgin Tubes, a local "hot spot" thirty-five miles northwest of Chicago. The article spotlighted the ADF Trick Team, composed of Art Abasolo, Mark Darnell, and Kevin Foss, with a photo of Art doing a gnarly Bar Endo.

Veteran Chicago flatland BMX'er Paul Hahn relates of this time, "In the early days of '84 to '86 it seemed like every crew of freestylers formed a 'trick team' and gave themselves a name. Sort of like bands. And just like a band with various instruments playing together, each team had ramp guys and flatlanders working together. Like the Hawaiian Punch team, Murphy was the resident ramp rider, Hiro [Tsuchida] and [Mike] Flood were the flatland detail."

In 1987, 16-year old Cicero native Jeff Mugnaini booked a freestyle demo at the World of Wheels, an annual motorsports expo at McCormick Place, which became the genesis of the aforementioned Hawaiian Punch Freestyle Team. Mugnaini remembers the team:

"The Hawaiian Punch Team evolved quickly. With the help of my dad, who worked for Pepsi, it started with Berwyn/Cicero locals Jeff Tomanich, Joel Parker, Neal Gannon, and Dale Phillips. I then met Paul Osicka in the neighborhood, who joined us. Paul was WAY more serious about riding than us and networked his way around Chicago. Paul introduced me to Hiro Tsuchida, who introduced me to Mark Murphy, who introduced me to Eric Carl and Mike Flood. It was a great crew. Paul, Hiro, and Mike held it down on flat and Mark and Eric were awesome on vert. I was open to add anyone that was willing to help set up first and then ride. My dad had a Pepsi guy on his staff work on the weekend just to drive the ramp to the shows."

Longtime rider John Ustaszewski remembers that show. "It was that first show that got me into riding. I met Hiro the following summer at Water Tower Place when some friends and I were wandering around downtown. He, Murph, Roy, and a few others were riding there. Hiro came up to me and introduced himself. I told him how I had just gotten into BMX after seeing Jeff Mugnaini's team at World of Wheels and seeing the movie RAD. He gave me his number and invited me to ride sometime. That was just the Hiro way!"

In 1990, Hiro went on to form the Fastbreak Freestyle Trick Team. According to Paul Hahn, Fastbreak "allowed younger riders the opportunity to earn money from riding so they did not have to work in fast food or other typical high school first jobs taking up all of their free time. It allowed them to focus on riding, 24/7, in the summers."

Among those who came up through Fastbreak was Hoffman Bikes-sponsored flatland pro Matt Wilhelm of Oak Lawn. "Hiro gave me my first big break as a fifteen year old kid, allowing me to ride in one of his shows. When I was just an average nobody BMX kid with a crappy bike and a dream, Hiro took me under his wing. He would drive from the North Side to the South Side to pick me up, drive to the city to ride with others, drive back to the South Side to drop me off, then drive back home to the North Side. I mean who does that?"

Yoshihiro "Hiro" Tsuchida passed away unexpectedly in 2019, just shy of his 50th birthday, leaving behind beloved wife Aileen and son, Jason, and shocking the BMX community. Condolences flooded social media internationally. Such was Hiro's reach of enthusiasm in his four decades of riding, that Maureen O'Donnell, a staff reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times, caught wind and dedicated a full-page Sunday edition obituary to the Rogers Park native. He remains well-remembered and sorely missed.

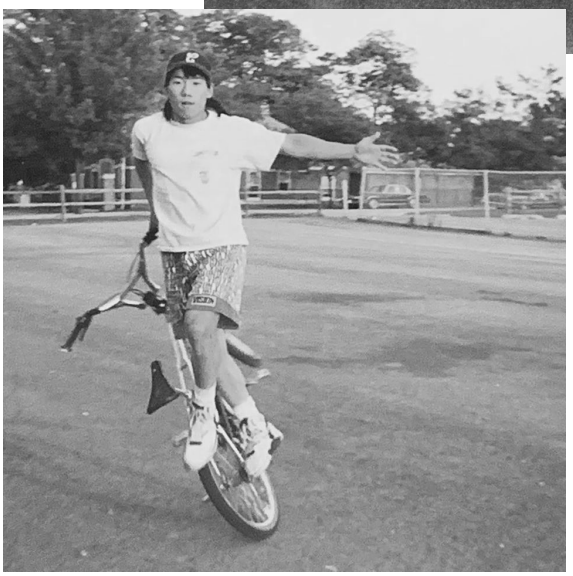
Continuing the "trick team" legacy today is Todd Gully of Flat 43 BMX, a team that performs flatland demos for parades, festivals, and special events. A former Fastbreak team rider, Todd grew up riding BMX in the '80s with fellow Lombard native Ron Monis, also formerly of Fastbreak, the two of whom to this day continue to represent the Chicago scene at jams and competitions nationwide.

Dating back some forty years, the Chicago flatland BMX scene runs deep and continues to roll with many still sessioning into their 40s and 50s. Resourceful riders can be seasonably found in underground parking garages, rented warehouses, home garages, and basements. For more info on local sessions, check out the Chicago Flatland Crew group on Facebook. It's a solid crew, open and welcoming to anyone who's interested in riding. It's the Hiro way.

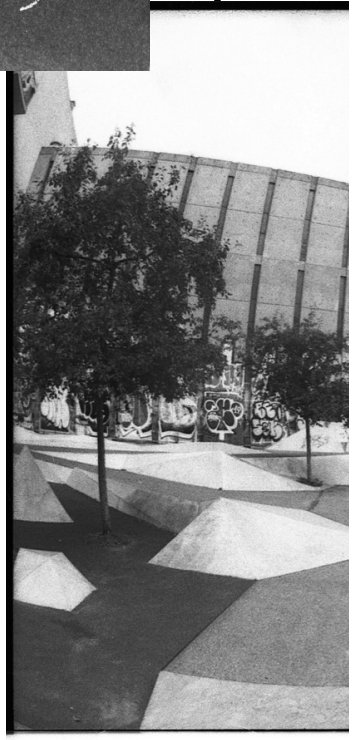
2020 Chicago Flatland BMX Roll Call

Tony Abasolo. Fernando Brenner. Eddie Egawa. Mike Flood. Paul Hahn. Mike Hartman. Chris Giebel. Patrick Greenfield. Todd Gully. Kim Klisiak. Steve Kolb. Shohei Mantani. Erik Matsunaga. Ronald Monis. Al Sprandel. Hiro Tsuchida (RIP). John Ustaszewski. Matt Wilhelm. ©

Erik Matsunaga, Candybar Power Mower, 1988



Hiro Tsuchida, Switch Foot Lard Yard
Circa late 1980s



STREET SCENE
THE TUBES
ELGIN, ILLINOIS
Kevin Foss, canyon jumping at the Tubes. This place is a haven for freestylers and skaters. Pretty creative graffiti, huh?
PHOTO BY BOB OSBORN
DEAD
RAD

Freestylin' Magazine, Winter 1984/85. Photograph by Bob Osborn

Sequence of events

words & photos by Sam Waller

Timmy Theus by Tim Burkhart

Dr. Shankington inadvertently pays homage to Chicago's favourite adopted son with some bonafide Jumpman® style in one of Denmark's many stunt-friendly basketball zones... or should that be basketball-friendly stunt zones?

***Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes* cont.**

According to Luciano, it's because he invented the artform. "I brought bruschetta to America. Nobody did bruschetta before me," he boasts. At least no one can do bruschetta like this. The secret, he says, is the abundance of garlic—providing a light sting to the cold tomatoes and basil that sit upon cracker-like bread. My brother, a man of radical efficiency, usually fires in a bruschetta order before he even takes his coat off.

As you wait for your bruschetta, you take in the sometimes unbearably deep atmosphere. In the dining room, kitsch-classical murals and mirrors don the walls, inverting the traditional Italian restaurant into an untethered and beautiful dream-plane where you half-believe you're about to meet a future version of yourself. Orange bulb lamps add to the effect, washing over the aqua and white linoleum floor. For those lucky enough to eat in the subdued front room, Bella Bruna's portrait watches down on the bar and few tables. Yes, she hangs there on the wall in hagiographical splendor, her wrinkly cheeks and watery eyes beaming out like some adorable Italian peanut. Ironic then, when you find out that Bruna was at the center of the restaurant's most violent episode. Looking at her kindly and old face, it's easy to forget that to be kindly and old is just another phase in life. But I had mentioned that Bruna once had a number of suitors…

On one particular night in the late 30s or early 40s, Bruna had three different admirers at the bar hoping to score. She was playing them each, making them wait. The men didn't like this, but being apparent masochists all, they waited. And they got a buzz on while they waited. But one of these jokers got too antsy—antsy and handsy. He burst into the kitchen and started hassling Bruna while she was cooking. "Come on baby," maybe he said. I don't know. The dialogue's lost to time. But he started to get touchy and Bruna didn't like that. This we do know.

Bruna grabs a kitchen knife and says something like: "If you don't leave me alone—you see this knife—I'll give it to you!" She's holding the knife down low by her waist. But this guy doesn't think Bruna's got the gumption. He bearhugs Bruna, trying to force her into submission. But as the man's arms close in, Bruna's kitchen knife slashes straight through his femoral artery—that's the giant, pressurized artery where your groin is. Force will be met with force.

The guy falls back through the kitchen door and back into the barroom. Blood starts spraying everywhere like a firehose. The other two Romeos at the bar see mayhem and book. But this stabbed creepster, of all things, gets embarrassed. Now Chicago is famous for rather pathetic tough guy antics, compensatory behavior for the insecurities that trail a lifetime of zero introspection. I mean, I've seen a ceiling pipe burst in Erie Café and water gush down on a tough guy diner who refused to move while he scarfed his steak because, "it's just water." But anyways, this guy at Bruna's takes the cake. Rather than call for help, as his leg jets blood, he's embarrassed. Maybe because he's been stabbed by a woman—maybe because he's got a wife at home. Either way, the guy tries to not make a scene while he sprays everywhere, and retires to the bathroom, locking the door behind.

Well, Bruna's worried. She raps on the door. He won't open. Blood starts gushing out from under the door. This ain't good. Bruna calls an ambulance. "It must've come by mule," Luciano jokes, "this was the 1930s or 40s." By the time the guy got to the hospital, he was dead from blood loss—exsanguinated. (**continued on page 7**)

Pergl's Picks: Food & Spots

by Bob Pergl

Do-Rite Donuts & Chicken:
bank to sub, rails at Jane Addams Park Distance: .8 miles

Perry's Deli
Picasso wall ride at Daley Center
Distance: .3 miles
(*See* Challenger, *Vol. 2, Issue 1*)

Fontano's
U.I.C "tea cups" & more
Distance: .4 miles
(*See page 13*)

Pequad's Pizza
Icky Park banks
Distance: 1.0 miles
(*See page 16*)

Manny's Deli
Seawall
Distance: 1.6 miles
(*See page this page*)

Taqueria Los Comales
Pilsen cellar door
Distance: .2 miles

Tacos El Tio
Church curved wall on Division
Distance: 0.4 miles

Nick Wilbat by William Kyle

Curvature Counsel: Chicago Seawall

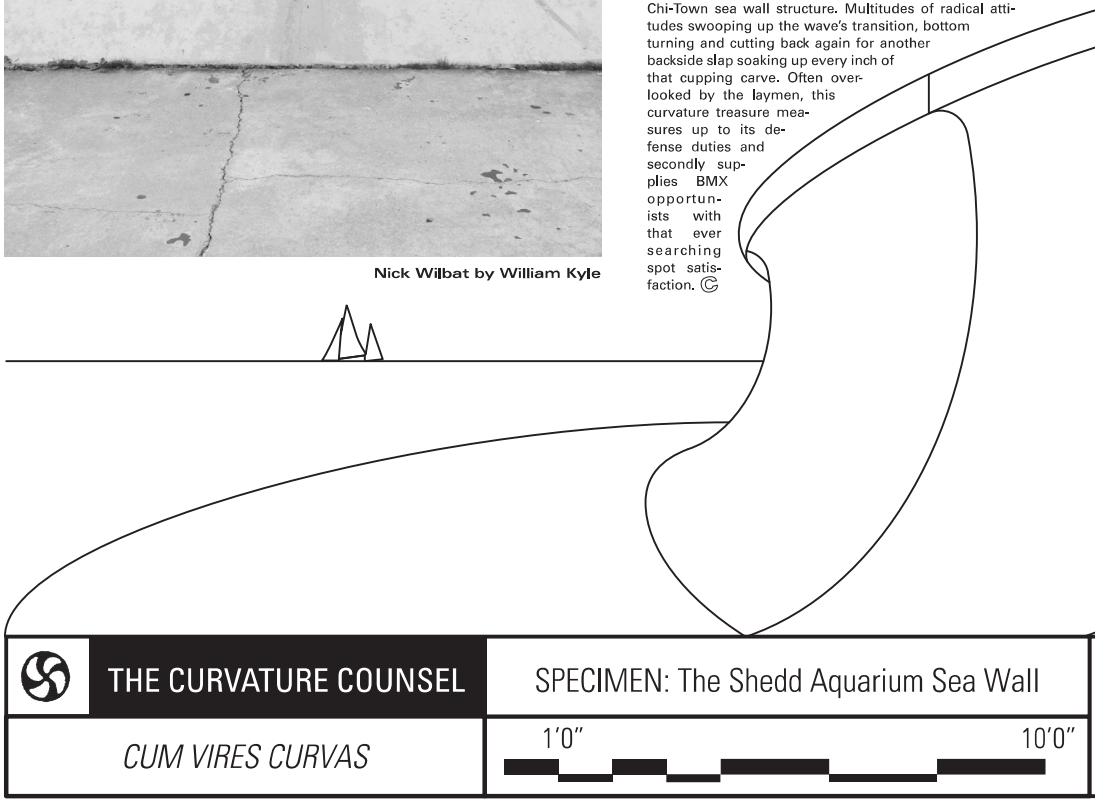
Words and Illustration by Chester Jones

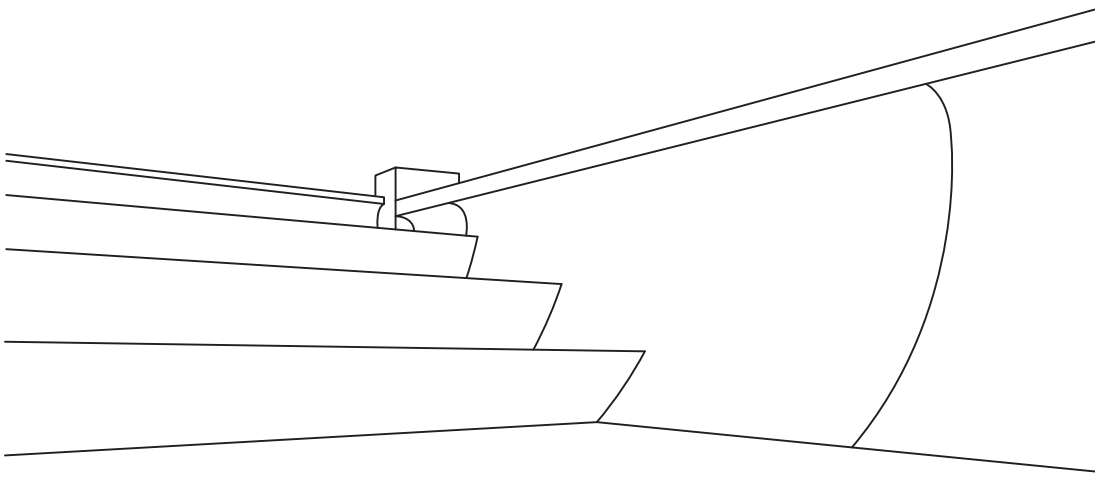
Mother Nature carved the Great Lakes out at the end of the ice age some 14,000 years ago. Big bowls of bounty housing precipitated arctic ice; wedging water in-between sister lake basins and imaginary lines. The Greats serve as a source for trade transportation, avian migration, fishing, and house a habitat of many aquatic biodiversities. Etch A Sketch'd at the shore of large Lake Michigan, The Windy City wound up situated at the southwestern waterfront.

Booming Chicagology—by the end of the roaring 20's one of the first inland aquariums in the world juts out into the Lakefront Trail. The Shedd Aquarium, a marble masterpiece housing plenty of fish for Chicagoans to marvel at. Upon rail, rust belt ingenuity mobilizes all five classes of fish across the plains in a custom-built aquatic railroad car. Fast forward 70 years and the aquatic theatre addition unfolds with trifling intrusion into Lake Michigan. This time a seawall fortification is in order.

If Lake Michigan's mid-drift ever decides to flare up on it's southern shore, there's a shield - a convex riparian ramp ring protecting the Oceanarium. Combative architecture whose sole purpose is to exercise elemental wave on wave dissipative war. The curved seawall aims to re-direct the lake's incident energy, resulting in a reduced turbulent wave reflection. Bio-mimicry at it's best.

Municipal design as ride-able architecture. The utility of curved Chicago concrete crust that's deep dished and cupped exactly for a rear wheel to nestle up in on. Greater subtlety of design and non-linear programmatic intent becomes clear when one applies the grandeur of the rolling wheel upon the Chi-Town sea wall structure. Multitudes of radical attitudes swooping up the wave's transition, bottom turning and cutting back again for another backside slap soaking up every inch of that cupping carve. Often overlooked by the laymen, this curvature treasure measures up to its defense duties and secondly supplies BMX opportunists with that ever searching spot satisfaction. ©





Masthead

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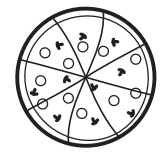
All my friends, new and old, it's been a weird few months. Love y'all.

Kevin Porter by David Leep

Scale:



***Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes* cont.**

Bruna skated on any criminal charges, claiming self-defense. Things soon went back to normal. And so these were those sepia-toned days before lawsuits, when settlements were more readily drawn from the cutlery drawer.

Sometime thereafter, five thousand miles away, a young Luciano was joining an amateur bike racing team in Siena. He'd zoom along the golden-toned hills of Tuscany in his red and white racing shirt that read A. TEMPORA, the wind bristling a downswept mustache and thick hair that puffed out from his white racing hat. "I used to bike. I was an amateur, but I had a Campagnolo with a golden screw," Luciano beams. "This is before I discovered America."

One of the reasons that Bruna's remains a great restaurant today is—though there is an aggressively laid-back atmosphere to the place—it is operated by a highly experienced restauranteur. "I am a professional," Luciano says definitively. His career began with a decision to go to hotel school in Italy. His first job then took him away from his Sienese bike racing team and to a hotel in Switzerland, only to return to Italy for a summer at the Villa d'Este resort, and then off to London for a two-and-a-half-year stint. In London, he worked at La Trattoria Terrazza of Soho, known as "The Trat," a swinging Italian restaurant of historic importance, being commonly credited with introducing a hipper kind of Italian fare to England upon opening in 1959. "I had a lot of fun in the restaurant industry," Luciano says. "It's hard. But I met a lot of nice people."

After London, Luciano got a job on the Love Boat. Not the television show, but the actual cruise liner the show was based upon. From 1971 to 1976, Luciano worked the bar on the upstairs deck and the dining room downstairs. And aboard, he met a fellow Italian, a Scalabrinian priest based out of Chicago, who ran the cruise ship's chapel (more on this priest later). Overall, life was breezy on the Love Boat, sailing the world, doing what one does while docked for 48 hours at various ports. But trade winds shifted when he met an American passenger. This was Ilona. They fell in love. Luciano left the cruise scene behind. The two moved to Chicago in November 1977.

Luciano soon found himself working at 200 E. Chestnut Street, Pronto Pronto Ristorante. He was now married. He was in America. What more could you want? But Pronto Pronto left him unfulfilled. His boss was an asshole. And it wasn't long before Luciano had had enough. **(continued on page 9)**

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Brian Kachinsky on: This Large Drop, Photo vs. Video, and What He Loves About Chicago

Interview by Nick Ferreira
Photographs by Tim Burkhart

This drop is extremely insane. For someone like me who would never ever even think of putting my bike up on that ledge, what gets you excited to even think about riding something like this?
I like to test myself. Growing up, some of my favorite riders (Dave Freimuth for example) took some basic tricks to new levels. Something as simple as a nosepick, when done on a huge sub, offers some new challenges to the same trick you've mastered on something small and inconsequential. I always loved this aspect and to me it feels like the natural next step. My thoughts with this one were "Ok, I've over-smithed flat rails hundreds of times but can I do it when I really really need to. Can I do it under pressure when failure isn't an option?" The answer is often "YES," but it really tests your focus.

Can you set the scene for how this went down?
I'd noticed and pegged that same rail when riding with Timmy Theus in the days prior. I went home after the session and thought "I could probably smith that." The next nice day I hit up (Tim) Burkhart in the morning and said "Wanna shoot a smith grind before you go to work?" He agreed and we linked up around breakfast time. I'd warmed up with a few hops and 180s and then it was go-time. I remember getting up on the ledge and looking in the office buildings above. There were a few people peering down on me while on their coffee break and thinking "this will be an interesting lunch time story for them to tell." I had a sense of urgency because I was scared and also didn't want to get shut down by security. In a rush, I hopped and missed my back wheel and went into an accident crooked grind. Luckily my weight was over the "safe" side to the right and I slammed pretty hard onto my knee. Knowing it was going to hurt worse once the adrenaline was gone, I gave a thumbs up to Tim and got it done. I grinded for several feet longer than I expected. I was locked in! After a quick photo check with Tim, we bolted before anyone said anything. Mission accomplished and the day had officially begun with a bang.

One thing I've come to notice is that you seem not only particular, but invested in how your photos come out. When you see a spot/set-up, do you envision how it might be photographed?
Absolutely, having been riding and working with amazing photographers over the years, I've learned the hard way with many photos not turning out BUT also learned the easy way at times because someone so talented was behind the lens. I love offering suggestions of how to shoot a certain trick/set up but also like to respect the photographer's vision as well. It's a true partnership and a bond of trust is created after time. I love that partnership and shared sense of accomplishment. I've also taken some photography classes before and know some basic rules. Sometimes those basic rules don't mean a damn thing when it comes to an appealing BMX photo but it doesn't hurt to have the outside knowledge. In a nutshell the goal is to show the spot and the trick the best. If that's accomplished, the rest is just details.

This photo is obviously nuts and even people who don't ride would agree it's wild. But you also often counter this with relatable spots/set-ups that just look good photographed. How important is the photography of your riding?
It's important for the memories and human bond that I mentioned above. It's the perfect scenario to collaborate and create something, together. The sum is greater than the individual parts. In the end, you not only did a trick you're hyped on or rode a motivating spot, but you have something to look back on. That moment of satisfaction is prolonged, solidified and no longer just a fleeting joy.

When I see an interesting photo or cool looking spot, that immediately sparks the urge to ride my bike. The urge is the foundation of why we do this. Spreading that feeling and motivation through a photo I created, feels worthwhile."

Do you think video and photo hold equal weight?
I think it's equal and just depends on what the spot/scenario is. Both require teamwork and talent on both sides. A photo is something I'll likely look at for longer. When there is no motion to distract your vision, you can focus on more detail in the image, surroundings, spot analysis, etc. Video is better for telling the "riding-specific story" and documenting aspects like speed and sounds. I love a good sounding dip. Music to my BMX ears.

What's your favorite non-riding aspect to Chicago?
My favorite non-riding aspect of Chicago is the energy of the city. The diverse population of people, from all walks of life and backgrounds, is incredibly motivating to me. I constantly meet people who are movers and shakers in their own passion or industry. I feel like this is a little different from NY or LA (which are both amazing cities) because people don't generally move to Chicago to "make it" or "get noticed." Chicago attracts talent, no doubt about that, but I feel like it's less pretentious than those other major US cities. Chicago's history, class, and grit make it a world class city that still retains some "Midwest niceness." I appreciate that modesty coupled with the fast pace and evolution.©

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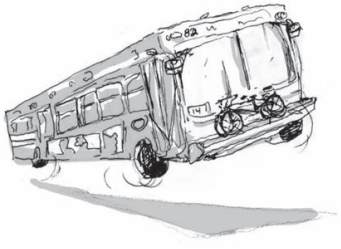
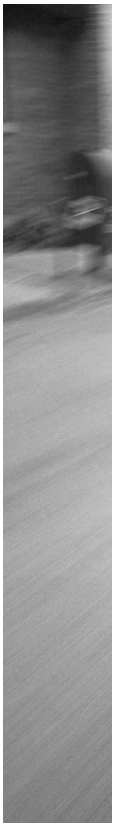
I remember getting up on the ledge and looking in the office buildings above. There were a few people peering down on me while on their coffee break and thinking "this will be an interesting lunch time story for them to tell."





Timmy Theus by David Leep

Skitching

by Matt VanAcker

Growing up in the suburbs the only exposure I had to the concept of "Skitching" was playing the 1994 Sega Genesis video game: *Skitchin'* at my BMX buddy Tony's house in grade-school. In the video game, the player controls an inline skater who can hang onto moving vehicles while racing, doing tricks, and avoiding danger. The early 90's birthed aggressive inline skating and it boomed just in time for this video game to sorta make sense and also to make it into the first X-Games in '95 (then somewhat rapidly lose popularity and get removed from X-Games 10 years later). In 2019, aggressive inline skates seem about as common as payphones, and if the game was made today it would surely feature skateboards or bikes instead of blades. The term itself comes from the act of grabbing on to a moving vehicle to hitch a ride while on a skateboard: "Skate-Hitch." A Google search on skitching produces results largely focused on (the danger of) skateboard specific skitching. From what I can tell most skitching related deaths, although relatively rare, occur via skateboard. A Google search for the word skitching alone doesn't turn up much about bikes, but it's not that cyclists haven't been skitching. I'm going to hypothesize that bikes can inherently handle higher speeds than boards, therefore, bike riders aren't dying from skitching as often as skateboarders and thus bike-skitching is not getting news coverage.

Beyond the adrenaline rush, skitching makes commuting on a not-so-practical-for-commuting bike AKA a BMX a bit more practical.

It wasn't until I moved to the city in 2008 with my buddy Cully, that I realized Skitching was possible and practical on a bike. The density of the city with slower traffic, lots of stop and go, bike lanes, bikes commuting right alongside cars being the norm, etc. makes for prime skitching. After hearing skitching stories from local Wilson (skatepark) shredders and seasoned skitchers such as Isaac Hoefling, Ryan Melia and "Pants" (Jason Tyrawa) and watching Cully do it a few times on our rides to and from the trails, I took a whack at it and soon was hooked. Hanging on cars from the stop sign on Belmont after the river and cruising west past a packed Kuma's Corner really added some spice to the post trails commute and usually got a few excited hoots and hollers from people waiting for tables outside. I have a great memory of skitching a park district dude's maintenance golf cart up the lake shore path after a late night Wilson session. Somehow the guy had no idea—I connected and disconnected multiple times without him ever realizing which enhanced the fun and excitement despite a relatively slow skitch. On the other end of the spectrum maybe the dumbest AKA fastest, most exciting skitch was during a solo road bike ride from Chicago to Milwaukee where I grabbed onto a pick-up truck at a stop sign on a wide open country road near Racine, WI and likely hit 45 mph before letting go. Skitching is fun and exciting for some of the same reasons street riding is fun and exciting. In fact I would probably argue that it is a form of "street" riding in the BMX sense of the word, though it's common on big bikes too, especially in the alley-cat/messenger communities. Beyond the adrenaline rush, skitching makes commuting on a not-so-practical-for-commuting bike AKA a BMX, a bit more practical. If you live on the South Side and are trying to pedal up to Wilson skatepark but want some energy left for the session, then skitchin is, like they say in the advertisement for the inline skating video game, pretty bitchin.'

Disclaimer: Well, Tony Hawk does not advocate for skitching (and I'm sure as hell he's tried it) so neither do I, its illegal in many states and clearly dangerous…as a matter of fact, so is riding BMX in many situations, riding a motorcycle, skateboarding down a hill, etc. so you probably shouldn't do any of that either. So for the record, can't say I recommend it. However, just in case you find yourself in a situation where skitching cannot be avoided, here are some tips:

Assess the Conditions

Road under construction - Skip it. Two lanes of high speed traffic (i.e. Western ave. or similar) – skip it. Recently paved single lane of traffic with bike lane (buffer from door zone), stop signs to pick up new cars – skitch central!

Assess the Vehicle

SUVs and trucks are ideal with plenty of clearance between the wheel and the wheel arch on the car body (which is where you are aiming to grab onto in most cases although various truck bumpers have handy hand holds too). Newer vehicles with plastic wheel arches feel much better on your hand – shy away from that 1970's pick-up with the rusted metal body and razor thin wheel arch. Steer clear of low riders, you want to at minimum be able to throw a cat through that space between the car tire and your precious fingers.

Assess the Driver

You don't have too much time to create a profile of this guy or gal, but you want to try and get a sense of how fun loving and care-free your targeted driver might be. Note any bumper stickers: NRA sticker and/or Trump supporter – skip it. Not worth getting yelled at or worse. Jesus fish – could go either way but you probably are ok – *Thrasher* sticker – Hell yeah! Younger drivers are typically better targets. A car full of teenagers might be psyched and happily skitch you halfway across the city whereas the dude in his midlife-crisis-BMW w/ girlfriend in the passenger seat is more likely to slam on the brakes and yell obscenities the moment he spots you in his side mirror. I recommend staying away from delivery trucks, semi-trucks, busses, basically anyone driving for a living. They tend to be pretty aware of their side mirrors and unwelcoming of your attempt to skitch while they are on the job.

Assess Timing & Speed

A smooth, in-control skitch is all about timing. You want to connect with the car while both you and the vehicle are in motion if at all possible. Everyone accelerates from a stop differently, so if you grab ahold at a dead stop, you have no idea if you are about to get your arm ripped off or ease nicely into the skitch. Try to remove this variable and anticipate meeting up with the vehicle as it leaves the line and you and your target are moving at approximate speeds. Also – know when enough is enough. Just let go if you sense any speed wobbles or malice from the driver. You can periodically glance at the driver's face in the side mirror or through the window and tell if they are completely oblivious, or if they notice you but are smiling, or if they notice you but seem pretty pissed off. If the latter, don't push your luck. Remember: don't skitch, but if you do, don't die. And for Christ sakes putsome brakes on!

Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes **cont.**

He came home one night and told Ilona: "We have to buy our own restaurant. I cannot work for this jerk!"

While Luciano was on the Love Boat, Bruna had been running her restaurant. But there was no more dancing on tables. Her male coterie had turned from hound dogs to Catholic priests. She'd become sick. Luciano says: "She was a sweet old lady. She was kooky. I think she felt she had a lot of sins to deal with. She was dying. So in old age, she always cooked for priests. She used to cook all this stuff special—lunch, dinner for a bunch of priests. And the priests would ask: 'How much for dinner?' She would say: 'Nothing. Just pray for me.'"

Among the priests that befriended Bruna was a Scalabrinian, the very Scalabrinian who once served as chaplain of the Love Boat. Furthermore, this priest found himself drinking at Pronto Pronto, Luciano's workplace, around the year 1980. On this particular night, Luciano noticed the priest at the bar: "How do I know you? Ah, the Love Boat!" The priest said: "Come down to the Italian neighborhood and we'll show you all the Italians." Luciano took him up on the offer. "That's how I discovered the area," Luciano remembers, "and then the magic Bruna's appears."

The priest introduced Luciano to Bruna. She was still the chef, along with her daughter. But because Bruna was sick, her daughter had to act the nurse. As a result, there wasn't a whole lot of cooking going on between the two anymore. Bruna was ready to sell. Luciano was ready to buy. And so it came to be. Bruna sold him the restaurant in 1981. "I was in the right place at the right time," Luciano says.

Bruna died the following year. Of her original dishes, one survives: the famous Sunday roasted chicken special. It is a dish, according to reporter Edie Cohen, that was prepared using a "secret recipe."

But it's only Tuesday and you're ready to order a main dish. This is a quandary for even the most seasoned Bruna's denizen, for nearly every dish on the menu is outstanding. That's because Luciano developed this current menu himself. Some dishes are variations on old Bruna recipes, others completely new. "We changed the names and we changed a little bit of the recipe," Luciano explains. "Because, over the forty years, the Italian kitchen has had a little evolution. We change the way we cook. A little more light. A little different. A little more attention paid to the ingredients."

Chief among the entrées is the lasagna—normally not the first on anyone's wish list and yet, like much in this place, what might appear unsophisticated is in fact a form of gnosis. My dear cousin spent his whole life coming to Bruna's. He never thought to order the lasagna. When I forced him to try it not so long ago, his reality shattered into pieces. He left that night dazed, wandering into the snowy streets, muttering: "That was really something. That was really something." Central here, according to Luciano, is the usage of bechamel as opposed to the oft-substituted ricotta.

(continued on page 14)

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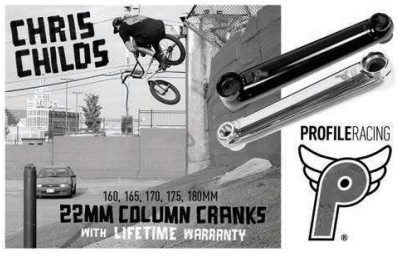


Chicago Skateparks

by Nick Ferreira

Kevin Porter by David Leep

Wilson Skatepark

Wilson Skatepark. Built in 2005 and absolutely the "best" skatepark in the city. I am very biased about this because it's been a solid 6 year love affair with this place and I see no slowing down. The park consists of a bowl with arguably endless combination of lines, a pool, and a "street" course. When I first moved to Chicago I lived less than a mile from Wilson but it freaked me out. I moved from Providence, RI where parks were smaller, roughly 4ft tall. I realized that while I enjoyed the relative safety of the South Side park, 31st, if I lived as close as I did to Wilson, I had to figure it out and get over my hesitation to ride the bigger transitions. Wilson is tight for lots of reasons but namely: close proximity to the beach, the largest transitions in the city, the bowl is mostly BMX because it's a bit too spread out for skating unless you're not scared (sorry). The downfalls are that it doesn't have lights on the bowl, occasional freaks (this can sometimes be seen as a plus), and nowhere to pee (legally).

Logan Square

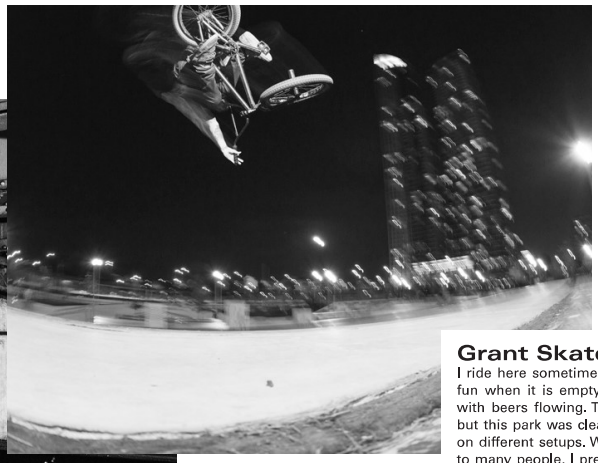
I've only ridden Logan Square skatepark once, maybe twice, in the 7+ years I've lived in the city. I guess that's about as much information as you need. The ramps are falling apart, you're stuck under 90/94, and the ramps are just kind of *whatever*. I'd rather ride flat ground in front of my house and do a 180 than slip out on pigeon shit dust. Peace to everyone that actually puts their tires on that place.

The "Dog Park" Skatepark

Chicago's best skatepark, is not officially a skatepark, but it might as well be. It's a park on the edge of the Loop. It's got a concrete bowl corner, featuring fence ride. It has those fun steep wedges that have transition at the bottom, and well, that's about it but honestly it's insanely fun and probably because you're not "supposed" to be there. It's weird that is still a reason to enjoy doing something but I'd imagine it has something to do with the general monotony of daily life. But what do I know? Back to the park, this place is for dogs and apparently they built the quarterpipes/bowl corner to make hosing down their shit easier. The other obstacles are otherwise a mystery to me. I've seen dogs standing on top of the wedges with the nice transitions but it seems like kind of a lot of money to build skatepark obstacles for dogs to just stand around on. I guess you could say the same thing about skateparks, though. Because it's for dogs, and dog owners bring their dogs to the park at all hours, this place is always a bust for me but some people let it fly at all times, throwing caution to the wind when it comes to irate, yuppie dog owners.

Frank Labudzik by Tim Burkhart

Bob Pergl by David Steiner



David Steiner by David Leep

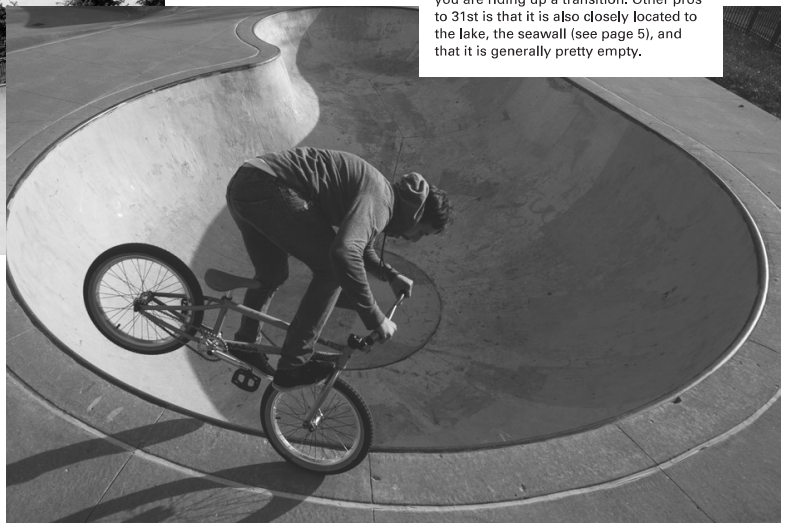
Grant Skatepark

I ride here sometimes and it's usually only fun when it is empty or at night, typically with beers flowing. There's some fun lines but this park was clearly built to "practice" on different setups. While this is of interest to many people, I prefer to not pretend I'm riding street and accept the fact that I am a grown man at a skatepark ;) One of the best aspects of this park is watching the freak scene converge. This park is the most centrally located, as it lands "about" right in the middle of the city, on the lakefront. Skateparks attract all types, but Grant's central location seems to *really* attract all types and sometimes that's fun and sometimes that is annoying.

Tim Burkhart by David Leep

Burnham Skatepark AKA 31st Street

31st St. Skatepark, technically Burnham Skatepark, is the city's South Side park. The legend goes that it was built by the dad of some kid who skated and it certainly feels like that. If this legend holds true, it's made for a fun park that feels more akin to stumbling on a funky street spot than a skatepark. The park mostly consists of classic skatepark setups: ledges, pyramids, quarter pipes, wall rides and a section of bowls and a pool. The pool is a great setup and feels almost like a "real" pool. The bowls on the other hand are some of the worst transitions I've ever ridden. This is part of what I spoke about earlier in regards to it feeling like a "funky street spot." Tread cautiously and be ready to headbang at any time you are riding up a transition. Other pros to 31st is that it is also closely located to the lake, the seawall (see page 5), and that it is generally pretty empty.



Kevin Porter by Tim Burkhart

All Those Chicago Films You Never Bothered To Watch

Henny Brindle

Henny Brindle here. Sound familiar? Your old boy from Queens? Legendary waxer most philosophical, formerly of the Big Shot Movie Club? In case you didn't get the memo, I gave up writing about movies many moons ago. Why? 'Cause they don't make no good movies no more! And yet, here I am, this time writing about CHICAGO flicks. I know what you're thinking. Why'd Nick get a Queens born and bred son-of-a-gun to write about CHICAGO? Look, I got ties out here—a wedlock situation in Cicero. Anyways, you won't be disappointed.

But first, you gotta understand the context. Movieland is a fake place where everything's easier or infinitely more difficult but never boring, and the New York/Los Angeles continuum makes up most of this Hollywood backdrop. How many times has New York's Cortlandt Alley been used as a substitute for "edgy" settings all over so-called America? It's all the same shite. But sometimes, an auteur needs a little extra grit, a little extra character. And so, Chicago is sought out for this (and the tax incentives). But even rarer still, every once in a while, Hollywood greenlights a true-blue Chicago story, something that could have only occurred in the Windy City. This little canon is our focus tonight.

Let's get a 101 entry out of the way: ***The Blues Brothers***. I mean if you gotta ask at this point, you ain't ever gonna know. But I'll say one thing, among the multitude of Chicagoana loaded into this film (the flophouse in the Loop, Wrigley Field, etc.), I'd point out the Maxwell Street sequences, which documented one of this town's great strips of disorganized commercial activity and incredible characters. Maxwell Street has since been victim to urban renewal, part of "University Village," which has about as much charm as an Arizona medical complex. Thankfully, like Abel Ferrara's New York movies, productions like *The Blues Brothers* capture a bygone

world that was rougher and maybe realer. Lot of talent involved in making this classic but, according to firsthand testimony, the key contributor was cocaine.

Michael Mann's ***Thief*** is not only the greatest Chicago film, it is one of the greatest films period. On one level, it depicts some of the city's most iconic but rarely shown elements. The industrial south branch of the river. The bungalows. The uncanny used car lots along Western Ave., etc. But on another level it captures the spirit of the city: that wet concrete and the color temperature blue street lights that scream out that melancholy, that trappedness, that only Chicago can produce (see the diner scene). Anyways, plot-wise it's about a safecracker trying to crack his way out of "the life." Based on the career of boxman Frank Hohimer. An epic Tangerine Dream score accompanies.

Chicago's moody and vibey and so Tangerine Dream is only a natural musical solution to a Chicago film, and of course those Germans scored another Chicago great: ***Risky Business***. Unfortunately, unless you've seen this film you might think *Risky Business* is just Tom Cruise goofing around in his underpants. In reality, it's a downtempo coming of age mood piece about that gulf between what we expect for ourselves versus what we actually get and then what sexy things happens when you just say "Fuck it." Lots of northside suburban action as well as lake shots and the glorious scene of Tom Cruise going down on Rebecca de Mornay on the El to Tangerine Dream's "Love on a Real Train." And as long as we're talking Northside suburbs, let's briefly roll call the cozy-if-naïve work of John Hughes: ***Sixteen Candles***, ***Home Alone***, ***The Breakfast Club***, ***National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation***, ***Planes, Trains and Automobiles***, and of course one of the most famous Chicago film's ***Ferris Bueller's Day Off***. These encapsulate the north suburbs like no others.

Lingering just a little longer on the North Side, we must also tip our hats to ***Glengarry Glen Ross***—the classic ballad of the jagoff realtor. Like so many critiques of greed (read: *Wall Street*, *Wolf of Wall Street*), this film is ironically romanticized by the greedy-though-naïve (read: twenty-something Lincoln Park biz bois). Let this not deter you. But anyways, the whole thing takes place in a northwest side real estate office and a Chinese restaurant across the street (and furthermore was filmed in New York!), but still it's written by Chicago playwright David Mamet and totally nails that hardass skeeze of Chicago's hustlers.

And speaking of Chicago real estate, I should also mention ***Above The Law***. Before the West Loop/Fulton Market area turned into a Soho Housified clusterfuck of over-valuated property and soon to be empty high-rise condos—it was Chicago's meat market. Bridgford Meats and Peoria Meats still attest to that history, though they now be surrounded by the corporatized sprawl of characterless yet "down-to-earth" food. Anyways, you can see the neighborhood in all its bloody glory in one of Steven Seagal's greatest efforts. In *Above The Law*, Seagal plays Nico Toscani a martial arts trained CPD Vice Squad detective with a background in Vietnam-era CIA covert ops. Great hijinks and shootouts among Chicago's 1980s meat purveyors. Need I say more?

Let me throw down a caveat. I don't usually go in for wet noodles—you know, sad bastards who think the whole world is owed to them? But there's something to be said for ***High Fidelity***, the Gen X record store classic and basis for the limply millennial "Brooklyn" remake. The original *High Fidelity* is a great Chicago locations film, particularly Wicker Park. One of the best. And by that I mean—like *Thief*—it is saturated in Chicago, could only take place in Chicago: the streets, the apartments, the bars, the t-shirts, and the Schuba's poster on the wall. The attention to local detail is so fantastic that it really makes you reassess the "artistry" of other so-called "Chicago" films, like the celebrated *Widows*, which was the masquerading cinematic equivalent to the *New York Times*' safari hat coverage of Chicago crime.

This little rant is dedicated to narrative features but Chicago is the basis for some of the great art-documentaries in cinema history. Many of these are produced by Kartemquin Films, a legendary film house established way back in 1966. Since that time, they've documented Chicago's very particular vibe along with its social strife, racial divides, and explored those neighborhoods less hailed by Hollywood. ***Hoop Dreams*** is probably the most famous of these, a film about two aspiring high school basketball players, one from Cabrini-Green and the other from West Garfield. The film came out amidst the blindingly optimistic days of 1990s Bulls mania—so, many folks expected *Hoop Dreams* to be some real-life version of *Space Jam*. Instead, *Hoop Dreams* delivers a devastatingly deep look at life in Chicago—a Chicago far away from John Hughes' North Side suburbs or the privileges of the Gold Coast. Two other Kartemquin faves include the

oddly uplifting ***Inquiring Nuns*** (exactly what it sounds like) and the short doc ***Trickbag***.

Two of my personal all-time Chicago films are a strange hybrid of staged action and documentary footage ala Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery*. The first is a little-known short film called ***Nightsong*** by Don Klugman. Hallucinatory and haunted, the film depicts real life doo-wop-turned-folksinger Willie Wright's attempts to navigate white nightclubs on the near North Side of Chicago in the early 1960s. The eerily lit photography of Willie—playing famous bygone venues like the Esquire, Mister Kelly's, and the Tender Trap—is shot on cheap film stock begetting the psychedelic color saturation seen in Kenneth Anger's magickal films. Neither straight doc nor straight narrative nor purely experimental, *Nightsong* exists in a liminal space between real concert footage and inner psychology. In essence, the film portrays a seemingly unbreachable divide between performer and audience, black Chicago and white Chicago, and—perhaps most fundamentally—between those who feel and those who don't.

More well-known than *Nightsong*, though still obscure to your run-of-the-mill Netflix subscriber, is Haskell Wexler's masterpiece ***Medium Cool***. Invoking Marshall McLuhan off the bat, the impeccably shot verité style film is an assessment of media and power and protest, and how you can't have any of the three without the other two. Specifically, while following the morally complex life of a news cameraman played by Robert Forster (RIP), *Medium Cool* addresses topics like the limits of knowledge, observation versus participation, subjectivity, and that difficult question of who gets to tell who's story. The slightly experimental narrative approach delivers truths unavailable to conventional plot structures and culminates with actors walking into raw footage of the 1968 Democratic Convention bloodbath. Its at once an intimate study and a completely epic cinematic effort that goes to show that today's cultural battles weren't forged in a vacuum, but are the cumulative snowballing of historical forces that extend back into the foggy origins of American life.

Back to Hollywood. Let me guess your uncle's favorite movie. Look, I love Brian DePalma. Still, ***The Untouchables*** is quite atrocious. I mean, it's unwatchable. All the same, it is iconic. Try to walk through Union Station and not see that baby carriage go flying down the stairs. Still, a much better (and slept on) Depression-era organized crime film is Sam Mendes' ***Road to Perdition***—a brutally moody revenge plot that would appear to

more accurately depict our historical underworld. Great finale on the shores of Michiana too.

Chicago was the low-key breeding ground for a lot of the occult and paranormal fads of the late 20th century. And it's got it's supernatural film canon to prove it. There's ***Child's Play*** of course, with the great South Loop shoot-out-opener-turned-trans-migration-of-the-soul. But you can't surpass ***Candyman***, Clive Barker's surreal tale of a quasi-spiritual being residing in a burnt-out apartment within the notorious Cabrini-Green housing project. This 1992 film is socially important in that a) it features two female leads and, besides the Candyman, all male parts have a definitively supportive role—unique then as it is now; b) while the film certainly exoticizes the projects, it does tie the oppressive nature of Chicago's public housing back to America's elemental sins of slavery through a supernatural tale. *Candyman* is edited a little too quickly for the vibe to really seep in (seemingly the hand of a clumsy studio exec), but it is just plain excellent and documents a Chicago location rarely seen, and since demolished. And then there's ***Flatliners***—a garishly lit Loyola University medical thriller from leading rococo extraordinaire: Joel Schumacher. In short, this film is about some med students who try to temporarily kill and then resuscitate themselves in order to get a glimpse at the afterlife.

I mean the list goes on. How about the most played feature ever on cable: ***The Fugitive***, or that same director's (Andrew Davis) little-known debut jazz-funk feature ***Stony Island***? Or what about the Chicago suburbs masterpiece ***Wayne's World***? Or ***Backdraft***? Or then there's television, I mean ***Kolchak the Night Stalker***?? But hey, I could write all day and yet Nick only paid me a lousy four thousand bucks to write one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six words. No, we can't hit every Chicago film on that sort of budget. Heck, he can't even afford a conclusion to this article—so he ain't gonna get one! ©

Challenger BMX Magazine

A Collective List of Chicago by a Bunch of Chicago BMXers:

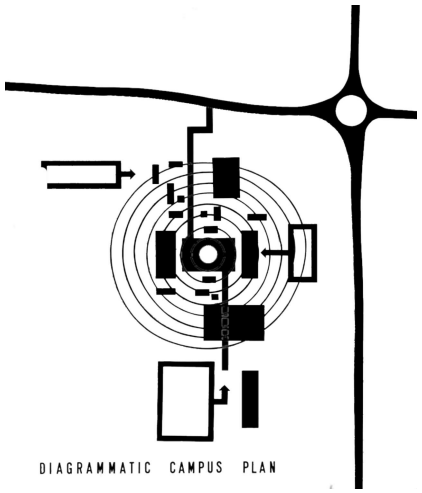
Wilson, 31st Street, Lake Michigan, Jordan, DJ Rashad, pedaling everywhere, the Garden, trails in the city!, swimming, rooftops, PingTom park, the dog park, Lake Shore Drive, Lake Shore Drive at Sunset, Fatso's, Smith Park, Sultan's, Let's Roast, Fox Bar, Humboldt Park, Garfield Park Conservatory, Power 92, WGCI, Working Bikes, Summer nights bombing the 606 and doing wallrides, Bulgogi, Clemente skatepark, Chava's, jerk taco, yatch club, Fires at Tim's, Wyler Road, Parson's, Dial M, the Melia Pool roof drop in (see page 16). Skitching. Darude "Sandstorm," Sea Wall, Pippen, DRose, Fontano's Subs, Maxwell Street, Mario's Italian Ice, 92.9 The Loop's last songs before it got turned to a Christian rock station: Motley Crue's "Shout at the Devil," Iron Maiden's "The Number of the Beast," and AC/DC's "Highway to Hell"!, G Herbo, Lil Bibby, Emerald Necklace of Chicago, UIC, Thursday Night Social Rides, Critical Mass, World Naked Bike Ride, Lost Boys, Dave Thompson's Props Bio, Dennis Rodman, Bronzeville, Michael Reese Hospital RIP, Walt Disney School, Walt Disney was born in Hermosa, Mr T lived in the Robert Taylor homes, when Jane Byrne lived in Cabrini Green and couldn't hang, Traspasada, Traspasada's black salsa, the spots in the suburbs, Dustin Stier, the clock tower, Navy Pier, Oak Street slab (r.i.p), forever rail (r.i.p.), doinks, Palos MTB trails, messlife, the riverwalk, Lower Wacker, Alice and friend, svengoolie, Jay's potato chips ...specifically "hot stuff," the Bakery, Ava's Italian ice, Wilbat's loft RIP, Wilbat's roof, Wilbat's loft parties, Wilbat's final loft party, Wayne falling through the skylight at Wilbat's final loft party, Wayne not dying from Wilbat's final loft party, the Orange line, the old skate plaza in Grant Park, Bacci's pizza, Pilsen, 18th street, OPC, the tea cups, late night Logan Square skatepark sessions, swimming spot by Wilson, Los Comales, the tamale guy, Archie's, the Empty Bottle, the epicness that was Dusty Grooves at Cobra Lounge, Malort, Carl, Digger, Hershal, Raleigh, Tofu, Ian's weird cats, Billabong hoodies on cold winter nights, Paul Mitchell Salon, Wild 100s, Cal fisheries, alley ways, curb cuts, the giant wedge on Michigan Avenue, Art of Pizza, Sam Schlappi, Delicious Cafe, Half n Half cafe, garage door Mike, trucker Mikey, trucker Melia, Teresa Poggenpohl, Dan Zabinski, Ricardo Lopez, Mike D, Nick Harkin's suicides, Quaggy, Chicken and Waffles squad, Levi, Sophie, dabacabana, we should have gotten a hot tub, Wilbat playing pool, Wilbat playing video games, Dennis trying to repeatedly break my fisheye lens I borrowed him, Ditka, the 85' bears, the Super Bowl shuffle, Phil Jackson, Bill Cartwright's voice, old Kanye West (editor's note: fuck y'all new Kanye is tight), Portillo's, Portillo's cheese fries, drinking Coors Light out of goblets at Portillo's, Krunchy Kurls, White Claw is made in Chicago, Richard's tree, Ashland Jewel aka "the working man's sea wall," Trixie and Chad, Dirty Dan: for the last time, call Comcast!, Scott Draper, Bobby D, Pita Inn, Oasis, Jeweler's Row, Luke VanRamshorst, the big curb jump in the South Loop, going on food missions with Pergl, getting sunburnt at Wilson.

Spot Reference: University of Illinois Chicago (UIC)

by Nick Ferreira

Concrete abounds on the campus designed by Walter Netsch and features all the staple college campus spots: ledges, rails, banks, and public art that's generally a lot more fun to ride bikes on than look at.

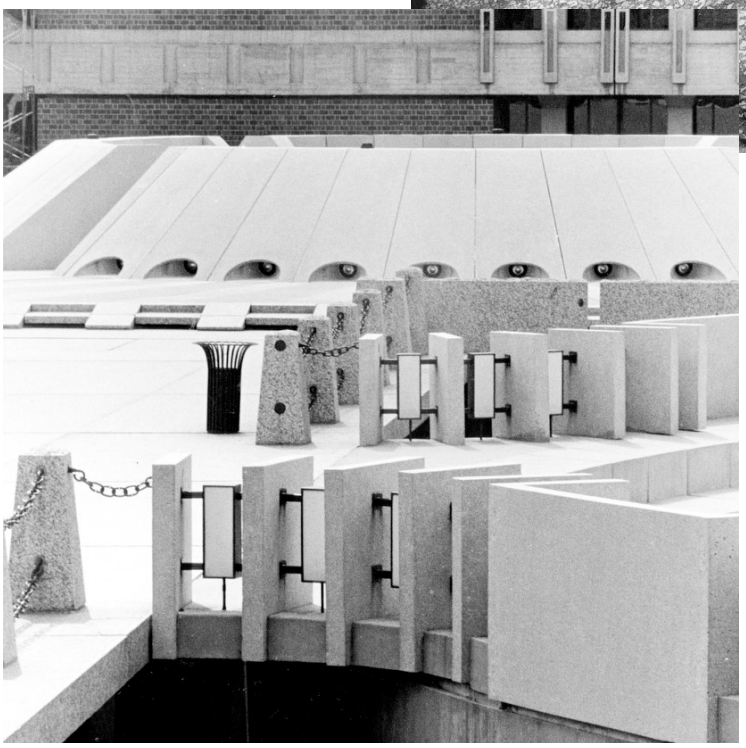
Trent McDaniel by Tim Burkhart



DIAGRAMMATIC CAMPUS PLAN

Paul Dybas by Tim Burkhart

Circular seating area (RIP)
Courtesy of University of Illinois Chicago Special Collections



The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is a public research university, the "urban" campus of the statewide University of Illinois system. Not to be confused with the University of Chicago, the private research university in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, UIC is the working class higher education option for Chicago residents. In fact, according to UIC itself, 1 in 10 Chicagoans are alumnus of the school. Construction began on the Chicago campus in 1963 and the college opened in 1965. However, it was originally known as University of Illinois at Congress Circle (UICC), referencing the circular interchange of Interstate 290 (Congress Expressway) and Interstates I-90/94. Shortly after the school opened, Interstate 290's name changed from the Congress Expressway to the Eisenhower Expressway and then the "C" became "Circle" and the full name was University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (UICC). UICC was the official name until 1982 when the University of Illinois system consolidated UICC with the nearby University of Illinois Medical Center (UIMC) and the whole thing became University of Illinois Chicago (UIC).

The construction of both UIC and I-290 led to thousands of displaced Chicagoans and neighborhoods forever changed. The displacement and leveling of whole neighborhoods is both troubling and interesting, and unfortunately not uncommon among other US cities post-WWII growth. Due to space, we don't really have the room to dig deep about that here but you should look it up if that seems even remotely interesting. Instead, we're here to talk UIC and its relation to Chicago BMX. Like a lot of public institutions during the 60s and 70s, UIC was built in the Brutalist tradition, the architectural style in vogue at the time. Brutalism, and modernism in general, has generally led to great spots across the globe and UIC is no exception. Concrete abounds on the campus designed by Walter Netsch and features all the staple college campus spots: ledges, rails, banks, and public art that's generally a lot more fun to ride bikes on than look at. There's something classic about riding a college campus with your friends and the good-time feeling of riding UIC is usually exemplified when you find yourself pedalling west into the sunset, post-session, during one of Chicago's unbeatable summers.

While UIC continues to be a staple Chicago BMX spot, it appears it had the potential to be even better before the destruction of some aspects of its original design. This design featured elevated walkways, a student amphitheater, and four circular seating areas. The circular seating areas featured banks wrapping around their entire backside. They looked incredible. The amphitheater and circular seating areas were meant to provide areas for outdoor classes. And according to Netsch, the walkways were meant to move large numbers of people along faster. As was often the case with modern architecture, the utopian vision of the architects didn't pan out in ways they envisioned. Those large crowds Netsch had planned for never really happened and for most of the academic year, Chicago weather doesn't lend itself well to outdoor classes. In 1991, *Chicago Tribune* reporter Andrew Gottesman described the lower level of the walkways as a "dark and unhappy jungle of bland concrete and columns stretching from the student union to the library." In 1992, much to the chagrin of architectural historians, UIC began the removal of the elevated walkways, amphitheater, and circular seating areas, forever changing Netsch's vision. The new design was spearheaded by Chicago architect Daniel Coffey. It's unclear how often BMXers experienced the circular seating area's banks but there's no doubt in my mind someone rode that spot, probably with some friends, and after their session they probably pedaled west into a Chicago summer sunset.

It's a drag the banks aren't there anymore but change is the nature, and fun, of street riding. You never know how long spots will last, and more importantly, what might pop up next. As evidenced in these photos and the countless sessions I've had at UIC, the campus remains a go-to place to ride. There's the tea cups, the small banks, the big bank, the hubba, the parking garage, well, you get the point. In the end, BMXers, skateboarders, and fans of architecture are probably the only ones that care about the demolition of the "old" UIC. Potentially envisioning this very article, *Tribune* architecture critic, Blaire Kamin, summed up who the original design was made for in a 1995 piece about the renovation at UIC:

The "before," still evident in unchanged portions of the campus, is a vision of urban anomie, best suited to skateboarders who enjoy its resemblance to the 21st Century Los Angeles depicted in the movie "Blade Runner"—mist and fog swirling about mammoth structures built atop the city's ruins.

Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes cont.

Perhaps though, you need something less heavy than the lasagna. Bruna's has the best Chicken Vesuvio in the city; the best bucatini amatriciana in the city; the best veal marsala in the city. The Vesuvio and marsala are accompanied by diced potatoes elegantly crisped. Others go in for shrimp diavola, which delivers a spice so classy it ought to come with spats. Some dishes, like Luciano's Ravioli and the Bolognese pastas, are adaptations of age-old recipes from a childhood in Tuscany. Multiple coastal vegetarians have cited the eggplant parmigiana as the best they've ever had, anywhere. Most of these dishes taste as if a forgotten time were locked inside.

Luciano's first decade in business was a hot streak. In the 1980s, Bruna's was arguably the lunch spot in Chicago. And at that time, it was still acceptable to treat yourself with some dignity and have one, two, or maybe three stiff drinks during your lunch hour. "There was the culture to go out for lunch," Luciano explains. "Here on the South Side, there was a lot of business at that time. Remember the three-martini lunches? All the businesspeople would come here. The more booze they'd have, the more courage they'd have to do business: '*Okay, we'll do it!*,' they'd shake hands [and have a deal]. Now, they only drink iced tea: '*Okay, maybe next week. We'll call you.*' It will never happen. It's true. It was better when there were three-martinis." So, Puritans took over the workplace, liquidity dithered, and the Bruna's lunch scene died down.

This might all sound like faded glory then, another old school restaurant turned casualty of the times. But that's not it at all. 2019 was Luciano's best year since he bought the business from Bruna in 1981. "10% up from last year," Luciano smiles. "I think it's the economy is good. People have money, they go spend it. 10% up from 2018." Nor is Bruna's divorced from the modern world. Luciano's daughter, Cristina, works at the restaurant when she is not exhibiting her abstract paintings around the city. Ilona, Luciano's wife, is a sophisticated contemporary art aficionado herself.

(continued on page 16)

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Jason Tyrawa by Dan Zabanski

The Garden

by Matt VanAcker

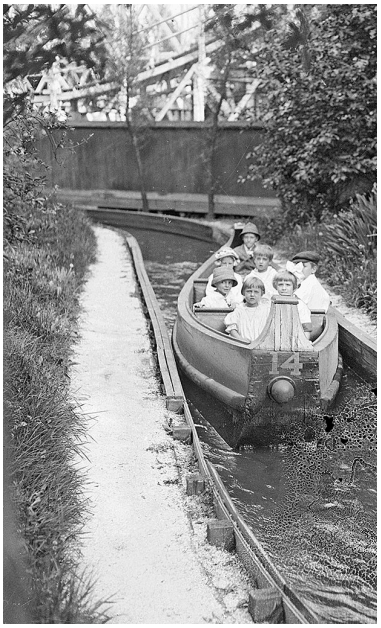
A friend and lifelong, dedicated trail builder once concocted a series of jumps and berms in which he dubbed "the dirtcoaster" that weaved back and forth over a concrete drainage ditch down a California hillside. Although this name probably describes many twisty trail spots, it would have been a particularly apt name for the tightly knit dirt sculptures that stand alongside the Chicago river now known as "The Garden."

It just so happens the same land The Garden occupies once anchored some of the biggest and baddest roller coasters in the nation; the amusement park that occupied the land was called "Riverview." According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Riverview Amusement Park was opened in 1904, when the park closed on Sept. 1, 1967, it had 120 rides, including six roller-coasters, a parachute jump and rockets." The park's slogan was "Laugh your troubles away," yet the thrills were real in the sense that it seemed plausible you could actually die there. Some of the roller coasters were pretty gnarly/rickety; there were rumors of people thrown from the Bobs and decapitations on the Fireball. Why the beloved park closed is unclear; some cite racial tension and escalating violence at the park, while others say the land was too valuable and it was sold for a pretty penny to developers. Much of the land around the trails did get developed into retail spaces, Devry college, etc., however the park district acquired some of the undeveloped land near the river in 1979 and turned it into Clark Park.

For being smack dab in the middle of a big city, the woods at Clark Park has always been pretty unregulated. It has long been a party spot for the more socially inclined attendees of nearby Lane Tech High School. And of course, if kids can do drugs and have sex back there without anyone noticing or caring, that means it's the perfect spot to build some jumps. Local residents told me kids have been building jumps and riding dirt bikes back there as early as the 1970's. Jeremy Kawka grew up in Ukrainian Village, about 4 miles from the spot, and from an early age was aware of its existence; he knew someone, or at least someone's older brother who had ridden the jumps, and eventually got on his Specialized "Fatboy" and went to check it out for himself. Jeremy (Now 42) remembers ripping into the woods off of the asphalt bike trail running along the river and hitting two nibbler jumps on what is now the pump-track end. At some point, two doubles were built on the other side (south end) of the woods which would eventually become The Garden's "main line" of dirt jumps. Early on, the spot was referred to by its closest architectural landmarks and either called the Devry Jumps or the Lane Tech Trails. During the early 2000's, a MTB crew: Chicago Free Ride (CRF) were the main dudes riding back there. The "Lane Tech Trails" remained in this form for a while: simply two or three jumps that you pedaled at as fast as you could.

The accessibility factor, the fact that these trails exist in the midst of one of the largest U.S. cities, is a big part of what makes them unique/great, but is at times a curse for The Garden's caretakers. The trails sit exactly 2.3 miles west of Wrigley Field, three miles west from the beach on Lake Michigan and 6 miles northwest of the iconic Sears...err excuse me, "Willis Tower" nestled in Chicago's skyline. In the grand scheme of things, the trails are quite close to the heart of the city.

During these early years, the few people who brought tools out to maintain the trails were outnumbered by people who showed no care for what had been created. In addition, the building materials on site sucked; the native "soil" is a mix of: gritty topsoil/rotted woody debris, a bit of clay, asphalt/concrete rubble, and broken bottles from Riverview, so the materials early diggers had to work with were far from ideal for constructing sturdy jumps that saw a lot of pedestrian abuse. Jeremy explains, "Gang-bangers would hang back there smoking blunts and breaking glass everywhere, kids would be running on the jumps...there were more people out there not giving a shit other than riders, and there was always the fear of working your ass off to fix a lip only to come back and find that someone fucked it up." The trails were untarped and more or less up for grabs at this point. **(continued on next page)**



Courtesy Chicago History Museum

WBMX

Right before I moved to Chicago I slowly started getting into dance music; I'd hear someone play something at a party (one of the first tracks I heard that blew me away was "I've Got So Much Love To Give" a classic track by Together) and I'd desperately try to figure out what the track was. It was fun and it felt like I needed to do research to understand it, similar to first getting into riding and punk/hardcore. When I finally moved to Chicago in 2012, it solidified my interest in the genre as the city is full of such rich history: Frankie Knuckles and the Warehouse, Trax Records, Dance Mania Records, footwork, etc. I soon found out about the old house station, WBMX, that hosted a legendary crew of 5 DJs referred to as the "Hot Mix 5." The "Hot Mix 5," composed of Farley "Jackmaster" Funk, Mickey "Mixin" Oliver, Scott "Smokin" Silz, Ralphi Rosario and Kenny "Jammin" Jason, would spin weekend nights on WBMX, broadcasting the (mostly) regional genre across the city, creating a collective party via car speakers and home stereos. There's exhaustive histories of WBMX out there if you look for them, and I would encourage you to do so. Dance/Electronic music was something I never thought I'd get into. I often think that the 16-year old me would scoff at the idea of listening to this genre but I've found a lot of similarities with the other genres I've obsessed over: dedication to the subculture, relentless touring, DIY aesthetics, an emphasis on visuals, and a real community. There's some great WBMX mixes floating around the web that forward thinking amateur audio archivists recorded that will be an important record of Chicago's history. This probably goes without saying, but I love that the station was called WBMX. Perhaps I'm easily entertained but if you ride BMX, how can that not make you happy?

The Poland/Chicago Connection with Pawel Bronkowski

by Nick Ferreira
Photo (left) by Tim Burkhart

When did your family move to Chicago? Where in Poland are you from?
My family moved to Chicago in 1995 when I was about 7 years old. I'm from a town in Poland called Kazimierza Wielka about an hour Northeast of Krakow.

I'm not really expecting you to speak for all Polish people but what do you think keeps people moving to Chicago from Poland?
I think it's two part: first it's still the opportunity that coming to America may potentially provide and a city the size of Chicago has ample opportunities and secondly since Chicago has such a large Polish population I think it helps people find a sense of community, connection and to keep their cultural values intact.

In southeastern Massachusetts where I'm from originally, there's a big Portuguese population. It really reminds me of the Polish population in Chicago. A lot of the people I grew up riding with were also Portuguese. Was that something you experienced?
Yeah definitely, I think a large part of it was the immediate area I lived in had a large Polish community so the kids I met at the park/school and local bike shop happened to be Polish and I went through several groups of friends over the years that we used to ride with that were Polish.

What's the best Polish festivity for someone who has no idea about Polish festivities?
I guess it would have to be Pierogi Fest! Or any Polish wedding would be a large festivities in itself!

What's the best place in Chicago for Polish food?
The ones that come right to mind are Podhalanka which is practically stepping into 80's/90's Poland (located in Noble Square neighborhood) and Staropolska (off Milwaukee ave) but theres a few random ones spread spread around the city.

You're not living in Chicago anymore. What do you miss about the city?
I miss riding my bike/motorcycle along Lake Shore Drive, miss the nighttime downtown street sessions, miss the best skatepark in the world (WILSON!), miss my friends and family, miss the trails scene, and definitely miss pizza, Italian beef and all the amazing restaurants!

Another local BMXer, Eric Block, dug on and off during this time but was also discouraged when he would return to find many of his jumps leveled or changed. There was poor communication between the different diggers and even debates about which direction the trails should run.

Finding the trails within the concrete jungle of Chicago seemed miraculous to dirt jump-starved Logan Beyhl when he was introduced to the spot by his buddy Alex Bedoya of Nocturnal BMX shop after moving to Chicago in 2006. Logan, along with fellow BMXers Dan Zabinsky, John Markum and Kevin Jarvis took the reigns from the MTB crew in terms of building and expanding the trails. Logan explained, "The MTB riders all seemed to have full-time jobs and we just had more time on our hands to dream up, and build more jumps." During this time period (2007/2008) the riders and builders multiplied, and their constructive, unified forces finally started to outweigh any negative outside forces that brought trail entropy. Logan and Markum came up with the name "The Garden" with no other explanation besides the fact that they had smoked a lot of weed that day and that *The Secret Garden* (their first choice) was already taken by Frances Hodgsen Burnette's children's classic novel and the subsequent screenplay. Oddly, somehow it stuck. Logan recalls one memorable instance from this era involving a loose cougar (no, an actual cat) in Roscoe Village. A 150 pound cougar had somehow wandered into the heart of Roscoe Village and was eventually gunned down by Chicago's finest after they failed to capture the beast and it charged the officers; it was all over the Chicago news. The day after, most of the crew had assembled at the trails however one of the local groms nicknamed "Cheeze", who was only in grade school at the time, was nowhere to be found. "After some conversation," explains Logan, "it was established that Cheeze had been in the woods for the majority of the previous day most likely riding and hanging out by himself, and it only made logical sense that the cougar made its way east into Roscoe village via the Chicago river and the woods…where the trails were… where Cheeze was probably by himself. Oh my god, Cheeze was eaten by the cougar! It turns out Cheeze hadn't been eaten by the cougar, but for a minute there we were all pretty convinced."

Besides dreaming up alternate endings to the evening news, the Garden crew was dreaming up some bigger jumps. The jumps grew taller, the pits grew deeper and the park officials were soon asking questions. One area in particular was excavated well below 6 or 7 feet and affectionately known as the "tiger pit." The "tiger pit" was meant to become part of a new line which was to consist of a giant step-down into the pit and then who knows what out of it. At this point (2008/2009) Daniel Peter, Jeremy Kawka, Sean Gaskin and Tim Hovey via Chicago Area Mountain Bikers (CAMBR) started conversations with the Chicago Park District (CPD). CAMBR had been successful in opening a dirt jump park in nearby Plainfield, IL and their support during the Garden's negotiations with the CPD turned out to be extremely valuable. They educated the Park District on what dirt jumping was (answering questions such as, "but how do you ride in between the gaps?") and drove home the fact that the park would be built and maintained entirely by volunteers, costing the taxpayers absolutely nothing. In the interim, the crew agreed to fill in holes, including the giant "tiger pit," build a wood fence and create walking paths around the perimeter of the jumps, and continue to maintain the trails with clay trucked in by donors. The agreement with the Chicago Park District and City of Chicago was signed in March of 2010 and the trails, for the first time, became a legal place to ride bikes.

The 5 or 6 various jump lines that have evolved over the years have (mostly) been named after their wooden predecessors, the coasters themselves. You may pick from: Aero-Stat, Comet, Blue Streak, Wild-Mouse, or Shoot-the-Chutes among others. The pump track has grown by leaps and bounds as well, and now has the option of a continuous loop which makes seeing how many laps you can do before passing out totally doable.

Though presently in the form of dirt trails instead of wooden and steel tracks, the coasters continue to rage and this space remains a place to catch some thrills, escape the city, and laugh your troubles away.

The interviews with Jeremy Kawka and Logan Beyhl were conducted in 2011. Portions of this article were featured in a previous article in Freehub Magazine.

(mini)Spot Reference: Icky Park

by Nick Ferreira

Icky Park is the type of park that is so small and insignificant that it barely registers on city maps. Google and *Chicago Tribune* database searches produce scant information. It's a park in Chicago, sure, but it's seen better days and I'm sure developers would love to get their hands on this property knowing what the surrounding real estate goes for. Overpriced real estate aside, Icky park is one of my favorite spots in the city. It features a bunch of smallish brick banks, some that act as decoration around the raised seating/chessboard tables and some banks surround planters on all 4 sides. No one is ever there, and it's in this really bougie neighborhood that is fun to cruise through on your way to the lake or Wilson, especially if you're coming from the south. There's "L" tracks right by there and the chessboards, mixed with the decrepit benches give it a full-on "1980s city feel." It's super fun to mess around with manuals lines but the banks also have a good steepness to them for small banks—you can really get your tuck on and air out of them. It's probably a cliche at this point to say a spot's "feel" or "vibe" help make it fun, but sometimes it's just true.

Thanks for tuning in to another year of Challenger. The first issue of Volume 4 will hit newsstands June, 2020

Above: Chris Zidek by Tim Burkhart
Right: Isaac Hoefling by David Leep

***Bruschetta, martinis, and dream-planes* cont.**

Bruna's sits firmly in the past but destroys any newcomer in Chicago's food scene. Weekends are often jam-packed, especially game nights. Weekdays are steady and well-attended. Politicos love the spot. Mayors, aldermen, and precinct captains have all been common sightings over the years. Even now, Michael Madigan will slink by, gaunt and natty in high-waisted trousers. But it isn't all powerbrokers. Chicagoans of all stripes come and go. Nurses nurse half-bottle glasses of white wine at the bar. Beat cops snag take-out bags. Construction workers, stockbrokers, graphic designers, and doctors all dine here. Families from nearby Pilsen and Little Village celebrate birthdays with their children. Hypebeasts—making the daunting journey below Madison Street—have their minds blown, bearing witness to the wabi-sabi sanctity of a place that could never exist in Logan Square or the West Loop.

Yes, this is living. So why not cap it off with a dessert? There are a number of options, but really only two. Should you want something light, then a cannoli. These are not made in-house, but are prepared in-house, such that they are still fresh. One of the house staff prepares this dessert, and he will adorn the rim of your plate with a cryptic though pleasant message: "You are a kind person" being one example. However, should you go in on richness, there is but one choice: Tiramisu. This is homemade each day by Luciano himself. Fluffy and extraordinary.

You look around. Somehow, you're the last diner in the joint. Time to go and that's okay. You're full, slightly drunk, and no longer wondering if Chicago still has that ancient magic. But Luciano walks up. He shakes your hand. He thanks you for coming and he means it. He offers you an after-dinner drink on the house. Averna—some Sicilian amaro to help with digestion.

You drink the amaro. There is not much else to do with your night now, having achieved everything one could seek. You look up at the portrait of kindly old Bruna. She winks to you that truth of truths that cannot be named. Time dissipates. You drink again. You close your eyes. When you open them, you're already driving away, watching the Bruna's sign glow through the midnight flurry like melted butter under candlelight.

—for Sean

Parting Shot

Photograph by Daniel Peter

The ender of all enders. Ryan Melia, Eckhart Park Drop-In. Noble Square, Chicago IL circa 2008

P.S. Big shout out to this issue's insert sponsor, Vans

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